

Pastor Russell Lackey  
Reformation L.C.  
John 18:28-40

## God loves you, so deal with it!

Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. **29**So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?" **30**"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you." **31**Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law." "But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. **32**This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled. **33**Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?" **34**"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?" **35**"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?" **36**Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." **37**"You are a king, then!" said Pilate. Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me." **38**"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no basis for a charge against him. **39**But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release 'the king of the Jews'?" **40**They shouted back, "No, not him! Give us Barabbas!" Now Barabbas had taken part in a rebellion.

You have heard the old question asked in philosophy 101, "If a tree falls in the forest and nobody hears it does it make a sound. Better yet, if a tree falls in the forest and nobody sees it, did it really fall? Of course it did. Because trees falling have nothing to do with whether or not anybody sees a tree fall or knows that it did fall. The truth is that it has nothing to do with anything. Two plus two equals four no matter how you feel about it. Truth is truth. When people rail against the truth revealed by God, their railing against it is irrelevant. The only relevant question about truth is, is it true? If it is then deal with it, if not then ignore it (Stephen Brown).

In our reading from John, we come across Pilate who asks the question, "What is truth?" Pilate knew the truth. He did not want to deal with it. Pilate knew Jesus was innocent. "I find no basis for a charge against him" (18:38). "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him" (19:4). "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him" (19:6). Pilate knew the truth he just did not want to deal with it.

The irony is that as the Roman governor he reported directly to Caesar and was considered the most powerful man in the country. In spite of Pilate's claims of power to deal with Jesus as he wishes (19:10), when he tries to release Jesus, he discovers he is powerless to do so (19:12). Pilate is not free.

Before we pick on Pilate too much, I wonder if we are any better. We know the truth. We know the truth about God and about our faith. The problem is that in a world where everything is being challenged, we are afraid to hold our truth up. How many times have you watched a discovery channel episode and had a pit in your stomach? As if a show can prove whether something is true or not. They are seeking ratings not truth. How many times have you been afraid to share your faith because you were afraid that you might be talked out of it? You do not have to be afraid. Truth is truth. If a person rails against the truth, they are railing against God, not you. So speak the truth.

But that leads us back to Pilate's question. What is truth? What is the truth that we are to speak? The answer is Jesus. Jesus is the truth that we are to speak. According to the prologue, the Word of God entered the world, became flesh, and revealed divine glory as "grace and truth" (1:14). To his disciples Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (14:6). Shortly before his crucifixion, Jesus tells Pilate that he has come into the world to bear witness to the truth (18:37). When Pilate replies "What is truth?" (18:38), Jesus responds not so much by words as by going the way of the cross, which is the consummate form of testimony to the truth.

What is truth? Jesus! To know the truth is to know the love of God that is revealed in Jesus. To speak the truth is to speak the gospel. It is to say, "God loves you and that is the truth. So deal with it."

**In Jesus' Name,  
Amen**